

# Science Policy Office

502 C St. NE Washington, DC 20002 | Phone: 202-408-5558 | [sciencepolicy@sciencesocieties.org](mailto:sciencepolicy@sciencesocieties.org)

[www.agronomy.org](http://www.agronomy.org) | [www.crops.org](http://www.crops.org) | [www.soils.org](http://www.soils.org)

Act now to ensure strong AFRI funding

Earlier this month, President Obama released his final budget request for fiscal year 2017. In addition to supporting the Agricultural Research Service, capacity and extension programs, the President's budget request included **\$700 million for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) competitive grants program** – doubling AFRI funding and bringing it up to the fully authorized funding level.

Members of Congress are currently working on their appropriations requests for FY2017. Rodney Davis and Suzan DelBene for constituents like you to reach out to your members of Congress to help shape their funding priorities.

Fortunately, two respected members of Congress have stepped forward to champion AFRI. Representatives Rodney Davis (IL-R) and Suzan DelBene (WA-D) are circulating a letter amongst their colleagues asking the House Appropriations Committee to provide strong support for AFRI in the FY2017 appropriations process.

**Please contact your Senators and member of Congress today and ask them to support AFRI at the fully authorized level of \$700 million.** House members will also be asked to support AFRI by signing the Davis-DelBene "Dear Colleague" letter.

The AFRI appropriation request deadline is March 15, so we must act now.

[Use this link to email your members of Congress and ask for their support.](#)

You can make a difference. Be a voice for research and contact your members of Congress today!

---

Dear XXX:

The unparalleled success of the U.S. agricultural enterprise is the result of decades of investments in food, agriculture and natural resources research. Our Nation enjoys the safest, most abundant, nutritious and economical food supply in the world due to the hard work of our producers and the ingenuity of our agricultural researchers.

In the coming decades, our agricultural system must sustainably produce food for a rapidly growing domestic and global population. The Nation's economic prosperity and security depend on developing innovative, science-based solutions to meet our growing agricultural needs.

To meet these challenges, Congress created the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) in the 2008 Farm Bill. AFRI is the premier agricultural competitive grants program for basic and applied research on food, agriculture, natural resources, plant and animal science, rural development and nutrition.

While Congress' continued support of AFRI is much appreciated, AFRI's current funding level represents significant missed opportunities. Over half of the AFRI research grant proposals rated as highly innovative go unfunded. These



# Science Policy Office

502 C St. NE Washington, DC 20002 | Phone: 202-408-5558 | [sciencepolicy@sciencesocieties.org](mailto:sciencepolicy@sciencesocieties.org)

[www.agronomy.org](http://www.agronomy.org) | [www.crops.org](http://www.crops.org) | [www.soils.org](http://www.soils.org)

grants could hold the keys to solving some of the most pressing challenges facing our Nation - food safety and security, sustainable natural resource management, and clean energy production.

This summer marks eight years since the 2008 Farm Bill called for USDA's premier competitive research program to be funded at \$700 million annually. We are grateful that each year AFRI funding continues to grow. However, last year marks the first time AFRI funding met the halfway mark envisioned in the farm bill. U.S. agriculture cannot afford to wait another eight years for this critical program to be adequately funded. A significant investment is needed to support the best scientists and innovators working in the fields of food, agriculture and health. Therefore, we ask that you support a robust funding increase for FY17.

I would also ask you to join Representatives Rodney Davis and Suzan DelBene in signing the letter below to House Appropriations Committee Chairman Harold Rogers and Ranking Member Nita Lowey, and Agriculture Appropriations Chairman Robert Aderholt and Ranking Member Sam Farr requesting that they provide strong support for AFRI in the FY2017 agriculture appropriations bill.

If you would like to sign the attached letter, please contact Tim Martin with Representative Rodney Davis at ([Tim.Martin@mail.house.gov](mailto:Tim.Martin@mail.house.gov)/63931) or Ben Barasky with Representative Suzan DelBene at ([Ben.Barasky@mail.house.gov](mailto:Ben.Barasky@mail.house.gov)/ 56311) by COB March 10th.

Please show your support for agricultural research and ensure that AFRI has the resources it needs to discover solutions to the challenges facing agriculture.

\*\*\*\*\*

March X, 2016

Dear Chairman Rogers, Chairman Aderholt, Ranking Member Lowey and Ranking Member Farr:

Thank you for your outstanding support for competitive agricultural research at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA). As you meet to consider funding for the fiscal year 2017, we urge you to sustain this critical effort. Your leadership will make a difference in helping to ensure that U.S. agriculture remains competitive globally and our country continues to lead the way in food and agriculture innovation.

Since 1948, total U.S. agricultural output more than doubled. Over the same period, the U.S. population also more than doubled. The ability of the farm sector to feed far more people today while using less farmland than six decades ago is attributed to increases in agricultural productivity.

The major driver of growth in agricultural productivity is innovation. Average rates of return to public investments in agricultural research range from 20 to 60 percent.

Investments in public agricultural research are the major factors driving technological change that leads to growth. In the 1940s, almost 40 percent of American research and development spending was focused on agriculture. Today,



# Science Policy Office

502 C St. NE Washington, DC 20002 | Phone: 202-408-5558 | [sciencepolicy@sciencesocieties.org](mailto:sciencepolicy@sciencesocieties.org)

[www.agronomy.org](http://www.agronomy.org) | [www.crops.org](http://www.crops.org) | [www.soils.org](http://www.soils.org)

agriculture research only accounts for 2 percent of federal research and development spending. According to the USDA, total agricultural production has slowed significantly since the turn of the century.

In the last four years, the USDA-NIFA Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) review process identified \$3.85 billion in grants worthy of funding. However, with a limited annual budget, the program could only award \$950 million—less than a quarter of the science that the program's expert panels deemed worthy.

In order to continue the important work made possible by the Committee's prior support, we request robust funding in fiscal 2017.

The Nation's economic prosperity and security depend on our dedication to developing innovative, science-based solutions to meet our growing agricultural needs and managing efficient food systems.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests. We are grateful for your leadership in ensuring that funds necessary to protect both animals and people will continue to be available.

Sincerely,  
Rodney Davis  
Suzan DelBene

